CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

December 1999

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
with UN Secretary-General
Kofi Annan

Special Issue on Peace Building and Development

Prison Reform: Haiti

Giving up Weapons for Progress: Albania

Rebuilding Lives: Burundi, Kosovo, Laos and Palestine

FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

In this issue of CHOICES, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan praises the crucial work being done in the developing world by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His assessment is shared by many people in the 174 countries and territories in which UNDP, the UN's leading development agency, operates. And yet, the critical contributions needed from country donors to support the agency's work are falling, a trend that will take its severest toll on the world's poorest countries.

In a September address to the UNDP Executive Board, UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown spelt out how the organization's work is being undermined by a decline in contributions by major donors—even as the demand for its services is at an all-time high. "It is a perversity of the international system that when donors cut, they are perceived as having more power than when they meet their commitments," he told his audience. To reverse the trend, which he argued had taken its toll on the organization, he asked for both financial support and a renewed commitment on the part of governments to development, to the UN role in development cooperation and to UNDP itself.

To support his case, Malloch Brown enumerated UNDP's strengths: the trust and confidence placed in it by developing country governments; the array of specialized services it offers, as, for example, in the areas of capacity building, legal reform and good governance; the increasingly vital part the organization plays in conflict and post-conflict situations; and the Human Development Report, UNDP's tool for benchmarking, raising awareness and mobilizing action with respect to human development and poverty issues.

As we enter the new millennium there will be even greater demand for UNDP assistance, as the pace of globalization quickens in step with advances in information systems and other technologies. Countries already feeling bypassed will need even more support and guidance to mould the institutions they need to compete in an increasingly fluid world—and to recover from its shocks.

Malloch Brown stresses that partnerships will be vital to UNDP's success in the years just ahead. In fact, he sees all forms of reaching out—to governments, non-governmental organizations, the general public—as necessary to building the political support needed to get development back onto the world's agenda.

NetAid, the innovative website created by UNDP in partnership with Cisco Systems, a leading producer of internet technologies, is one way the organization is getting its message across, while bringing together all the major players in the development community.

CHOICES is another way that UNDP reaches out to a growing audience. The two most recent issues of the publication focused on the organization's work with respect to the environment (April 1999) and with regard to poverty and development (August 1999). This issue focuses largely on the issue of peace building and development, including a commentary by Mark Malloch Brown on Development for a Durable Peace. It also offers a variety of articles on UNDP's work in peace-keeping and development: from the rehabilitation of displaced people in Burundi, to penal reform in Haiti, to rebuilding livelihoods in Kosovo and creating income-generating projects for Palestinians. Most of those pieces are written from the perspective of journalists in the field in touch with project beneficiaries and UNDP's partners in development.

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COMMENTARY

DEVELOPMENT FOR A DURABLE PEACE

As we approach the new millennium, nearly 100 million people are caught in a cycle of civil strife. About 50 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Today, there are close to 40 countries faced with internal conflicts, ethnic violence and guerrilla actions. Since 1989, 97 out of 103 armed conflicts have been internal, and 90 percent of all war casualties have been civilians.

Conflicts rob people of fundamental choices: how and where they live; what productive occupations they pursue; which communities and social groups they associate with; and what social services are available to them. Under the ravages of war, essential freedoms, taken for granted in peacetime, are brutally eroded or denied. Victims are forced to live on the margin and have very little control over their own lives. Restoring those essential freedoms and introducing options that were not available before the crises struck are what the development dimensions of post-conflict management are all about.

More and more, the United Nations system, the international community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are taking on the task of rehabilitating lives and giving the victims of conflicts the choice to participate in the critical decisions that will affect their lives. For us at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) this is a crucial responsibility. We must channel our resources to focus on rebuilding basic infrastructure while laying the groundwork for good governance programmes that will provide urgently needed shelter, food, education and income to people who have lost everything. We must also ensure a rapid transition for their return from dependence on outside help, to control over their own lives.

The challenge is not only to rebuild a community or a society but also to deal with the problems that led to the conflict. In Kosovo, for example, the Albanians were systematically excluded from positions in public service prior to the conflict; now they will be in large part the new administration. Here the need is to provide expertise in governance programmes and to create strong institutions.

In many countries, UNDP is working with governments and NGOs on peace building and development programmes even while a conflict situation exists. In Angola, for example, despite an ongoing civil war, we are continuing with core development activities. In other parts of the world we have created models of development assistance that allow communities to achieve their own levels of self-sufficiency and self-governance, even as their national governments are convulsed by civil war. In such cases UNDP's experience of working with partners—local and international NGOs and community groups—is invaluable, as these groups provide much-needed assistance at the grassroots level in the absence of a functioning government.

Today, in Africa alone there are some 24 countries embroiled in conflict situations. In his message to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 26 May this year, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the UN and the OAU should work even more closely together on the "double challenge" of peace and development. He said that the continuing conflict throughout the continent is affecting investment and economic growth and that a "vicious tandem" of poverty and underdevelopment is still plaguing Africa. It would require political will—to solve the conflicts by political and not military means—to take good governance seriously and to promote economic growth, social justice and human rights. "It is time for Africans to begin to reap the benefits of their sacrifice, and to move from the fragile recovery of today to a more solid foundation for tomorrow," he said.

In a speech delivered to the Security Council, 25 September 1997, on the situation in Africa the Secretary-General said "Without peace, development is not possible; without development, peace is not durable." It is imperative that peace building and development go hand in hand. We in the United Nations system recognize that helping societies emerge from post-conflict situations is a challenge that must be met. Often the efforts to advance the economic situation of one group of people merely increases the fears and suspicions of other groups—the level of mistrust that exists in a society can undermine efforts to create a national consensus around a country's development goals.

However, we believe strongly in persevering despite these difficult circumstances, because there is nothing more disappointing than seeing people excluded from productive activity, cut off from their home communities, living in refugee camps and dependent on international hand-outs. We believe, very strongly, in giving people the means to provide themselves and their families with jobs and security, education and health—in a peaceful and secure environment. ■

Mark Malloch Brown is the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

By Djibril Diallo

INTERVIEW

In an exclusive interview for CHOICES, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan, reflects on the role of the UN in the new millennium, the organization's achievements over the last 50 years, and the contributions made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Editor in-Chief of CHOICES, Djibril Diallo, conducted the interview.

KOFI ANNAN

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Mr. Secretary General, the first question I have for you is related to a theme you have talked about a lot, which is that there can be no peace without development. What in your view are the crucial factors that can ensure both peace and development?

In the world we live in, most of the countries now in conflict also turn out to be poor. They lack good governance; they do not provide the basic amenities for their people. And here I'm referring to education, good health, and clean water. Having these basic necessities, the right regulatory system—and a government that believes in establishing "an enabling environment"—frees and releases the energies of the people to participate in economic and social activity, and prepare for their future. They will be too busy in these constructive areas to get engaged in the sort of wars or conflicts that we've seen destroying so many of these countries.

So I would, in this case, encourage governments to establish the right regulatory systems and to offer education and health services, etc. Of course, the international community still has a responsibility to assist them by providing development assistance and advisory services.

More and more humanitarian needs are taking precedence over development needs. For example, developing countries fear that the money raised to rebuild Kosovo will reduce the funding that would have gone to their development projects. What is your opinion on this?

A humanitarian operation is, by its nature, an emergency operation, where one is forced to move in to save people; the question of alleviating poverty, working with poor countries, and trying to improve their situation is an ongoing process that must continue. To take money away from development for emergency relief in one part of the world and thus ignore the essential task of development in others would be short-sighted and unfortunate.

In my discussions, including during the General Assembly, all the leaders and the donor countries I spoke to assured me that they are not going to do that because they understand the essential task that we are engaged in is to alleviate poverty and foster development. They also realize that it is a sustained effort. If you do not make the necessary investment either in the form of Official

Development Assistance (ODA), or grants, or debt-relief or encouraging private investment, you are not going to make the progress you want; in fact, countries may regress. So I hope that donors keep the promises they have made, that they will not reduce assistance to regions like Africa and South Asia.

Looking back over the last 50 years, what do you think have been the most significant achievements of the United Nations?

The UN was born out of conflict and war. And so, at the time of its creation, its founders were very conscious of the need to avoid wars and to protect the individual. This also explains why I've tried to reach out to the public to explain that the ideals and principles of this organization are to protect and defend what belongs to the people. The UN Charter starts with, "We the peoples." I will always place the individual at the centre of everything we are trying to do.

I think one of the UN's major achievements is in the area of human rights—giving back dignity and respect to the individual. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if we had that yardstick, if we had that convention before World War II. It may not have saved everybody, but at least people would have had a basis to say—"Wait a minute. This is not right. You're abusing the rights of these individuals." It probably would have made a difference. I think protection of human rights is one of our achievements.

Another one involves de-colonization. When you look at the number of nations and people that the UN has brought into freedom and given the chance to live their own lives and their own destiny, it's a major achievement.

In addition, there is progress in the area of development. When one looks at the results of all the global conferences we have had, it is clear that we have really put the development agenda on the table. We've provided an agenda for the world that, if pursued, would help us improve the lot of the poor. Some countries, like China, analyze the results of each global conference and try to plug the results into their planning, at the federal level, the district level, all the way down to the local level.

There are also achievements with respect to the environment. Before the UN-sponsored Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, although people talked about environment, it was not generally given the attention it receives today. The term "sustainable development" is something that the UN put on the table, and the work the organization has done in productive health services and in population control is showing remarkable results. So we have a lot to be proud about, a lot that we have achieved. It's a remarkable record for an organization that has existed for just about 50 years. Obviously we should not rest on our laurels. The challenges are still enormous, and we should continue our efforts.

How critical is UNDP's role in the initiative to eradicate extreme poverty?

UNDP, in a way, is the outreach of the United Nations system. UNDP is on the ground in almost every developing country, working with governments, individuals, and the public. For most people, UN workers in the field, whether they are with UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or the UN High Commissioner for Refugees are the human face of the UN. What we do in the field is the UN.

UNDP's efforts to develop local capacity, by working with civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, are absolutely essential. I think it has been proven, through UNDP's work and studies, that the poor, given a chance, given the right advice, a bit of money, and management training, can do a lot for themselves. We should be able to help the poor stand on their own—teach them to fish rather than give them fish.

In addition, there are other areas in which UNDP's work is absolutely crucial, as, for example, in promoting the education of girls and in working with governments to bridge the technology gap. It is important to help governments to bypass historic patterns and, thus, leapfrog over some of their weaknesses and forge ahead.

In which areas do you think the United Nations needs to be strengthened and what would this involve?

When we talk of strengthening the UN, we should be looking at the UN in the broadest sense. From the beginning I have said that alone I could do nothing. The UN needs to work in partnership with civil society, with governments, with the private sector and foundations to have an impact on the crises with which it deals. And so I think we should strengthen our capacity to work in partnership with all these constituencies and stakeholders.

I also believe that we should strengthen our own systems, our own institutions, which we are trying to do through the reorganization we have been engaged in over the past several years. We need to become an organization that is cohesive internally, between UNDP, the UN Secretariat, UNICEF, and even to some extent the larger UN system, and that not only has a coherent policy but reacts more responsibly and cohesively to the challenges that it faces. We should also develop our advocacy capacity to reach and engage governments and people with a capacity to give—and to give lib-

Secretary-General Kofi Annan with Djibril Diallo at the interview.

The Secretary-General and Mrs. Nane Annan comfort a victim of the conflict in Sierra Leone, at a rehabilitation centre for amputees in Murry Town.

erally, when it comes to our fights against poverty, for education, for health, and for all the basic issues with which we deal.

I believe we should also be able to advocate and push donor countries to do much more on the development assistance issue. Today, we are talking about debt relief. But debt relief alone will not suffice. If we can get donors to increase ODA, and at the same time, increase our own capacity to assist developing country governments in building basic institutions, then the foundations for future development will be laid. Those countries will be able to attract investors. And we have to understand that the conditions needed to attract foreign investors are the same ones that encourage domestic investors to risk their resources. This sounds like a tall order, but I think we can do it; and in some ways we already are moving in that direction.

We should also take head-on the challenge of good governance. And when I talk about the challenge of good governance, I'm not just pointing to developing countries; it's a challenge for all of us. We are governing in an era that has changed. We are governing in an era of globalization, and we need to understand that what we do at the local level may have an impact on the international level—and that what happens at the international level has an impact on what we do locally. And, therefore, when we help governments to develop good governance and a society based on the rule of law, to promote accountability in public administration and to build the right regulatory systems, we are giving them the solid foundation needed to develop on a sustained basis.

We've seen what has happened in the last couple of years. When faced with a sudden crisis, some countries that we thought were doing well more or less collapsed, because the basic institutions and foundations and regulatory systems were not there. So I hope that as we move forward and attempt to help governments, we will really focus on the issue of governance and of building a society based on the rule of law.

What do you feel are the most critical issues facing the new millennium? And what role do you see for the United Nations?

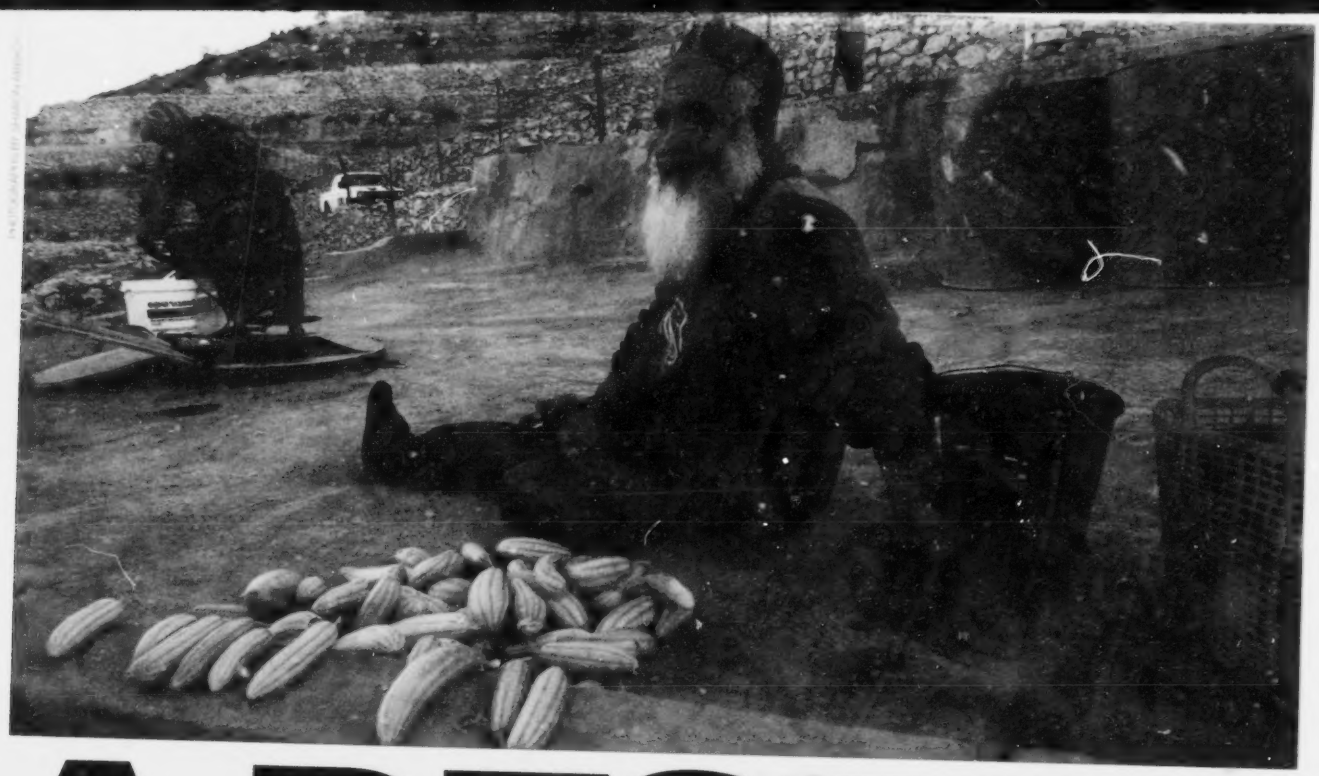
One of the major issues that we are going to be dealing with is human security. Human security, in its broadest sense, touches on the respect for the human rights of an individual and his or her personal dignity. Human rights in terms of development means ensuring that the average person—the individual the UN puts at the centre of everything that it does—has the basic necessities that he or she needs to survive. This includes health, education, and the possibility of living life to the fullest.

Human security also touches on the question of peace, which is more than the absence of war, and on our ability to end conflicts because, in today's world, it's civilians who suffer from such conflicts. For a long time we've tended to focus on a state's sovereignty and security. Now we are challenged because there is a growing concern that we should be focusing on the security of the individuals within the state, not on state security per se. How do we make that transformation? What will guide the UN in a world of ethnic wars and intrastate violence?

Nothing in the UN Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders. Indeed, its very letter and spirit affirm those fundamental human rights. In short, the problem is not the deficiencies of the Charter but our difficulties in applying its principles to a new era; an era when strictly traditional notions of sovereignty can no longer do justice to the aspirations of people everywhere to attain their fundamental freedoms.

The sovereign states who drafted the Charter over half a century ago were dedicated to peace, but experienced in war. They knew the terror of conflict, but also that there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of peace. That is why the Charter's own words declare that "armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest."

But what is that common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it? Under whose authority? And with what means of intervention? These are the monumental questions facing us as we enter the new century. ■



A DESERT BLOOMS WITH LIFE AND HOPE

By Ilene R. Prusher

Halhoul, West Bank—Hania Abu Asabeh pulls fat cucumbers from the earth in the early morning light, gathering a day's harvest before the summer heat comes crashing in. Ibrahim, her husband, plunges a pail deep into a cistern nearby and hauls up a load of water, exclaiming gratitude with each bucketful.

"Bismallah," he sighs heartily, in the name of God. When they look out over the newly toiled farmland that surrounds them—orchards that will soon be full of apples and plums and apricots and other kinds of fruit no one here has ever tried to grow before—they see many reasons for giving thanks.

"Among the olive-trees
of our valleys,
And in the ripeness
of the fields
We wait for the
promise of July
And the joyous dance
amid the harvest."

– JABRA IBRAHIM JABRA, PALESTINIAN-IRAQI POET

This time last year, Hania and Ibrahim Abu Asabeh—better known here as Um Amar (mother of Amar, the oldest son) and Abu Amar (father of Amar)—had little cause to spend their mornings on these plunging slopes that hug the outskirts of their West Bank village. Beyond the flecks of green held up by rows of new retaining walls is a dull brown car-

pet of brush that eventually fades to desert. To the untrained eye, these rocky hillsides look barren and uncultivable.

That was before the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) began assisting the Palestinians here and throughout the West Bank in turning the arid hills that surround their villages into stepped farmland rich with fruit and vegetables—boosting income, self-reliance, and hope for the future.

When this land reclamation project was first initiated two years ago, UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People was looking for any way it could to help generate income for unemployed workers. For a while, UNDP even paid day labourers to sweep the sandy streets of Gaza as a way to create emergency income at a time when border closures kept workers from jobs in Israel.

But then UNDP decided on a programme that was far more satisfying and sustainable: helping to provide the wherewithal and expertise for Palestinians to make better use of the land right outside their front doors. In recent decades, Palestinians whose ancestors had been farmers left their fields to work in Israel, where jobs at construction sites and restaurants proved more lucrative. Other land was never farmed because Palestinians saw it as too difficult to cultivate, too costly, or at the very least, unattractive in comparison to the benefits of sending their sons to work in Israel.

Since the beginning of the 1993 peace process, however, many of the job opportunities in Israel have dried up. Newly enforced checkpoints have made it more difficult for Palestinians to enter Israel from the West Bank and Gaza. Deadly suicide bombings launched by Islamic militants led Israel to impose closures on the territories, allowing fewer Palestinian workers into Israel and increasing the import of foreign workers from places like the Philippines, Romania and Thailand. Over 120,000 Palestinian labourers were allowed to work in Israel each day before the peace process began; that number has shrunk to between 30,000 and 50,000.

Future links between the Palestinian and Israeli economies are a question that leaders are expected to work out in peace talks in the near future. Some on both sides of the divide are arguing for an integrated economy in which Palestinians will continue to work in Israel. But those who argue for "separation"—proponents include Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak—think that the two peoples must split off to the maximum extent possible for the good of all. While uncertainty rules, developing a more viable Palestinian economy will be integral to either solution for building peace.

Creating new livelihoods

That is done one brick at a time. UNDP programme officers started small with four pilot sites, testing the ground in a few villages where low-income families were interested in farming fallow land. Of the four sites where clearing had begun, one was plowed over by the Israeli Civil Administration because the work had been done in an area considered outside the boundaries of the village. At a time when a final Israeli-Palestinian peace accord is being negotiated, the fate of nearly every stretch of West Bank land is up for discussion, and the very idea of a "land reclamation" project remains a sensitive one.

Now, UNDP works with the blessing of both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Agriculture, obtaining permits from the civil administration and working hard to keep the programme removed from politics. The results of the pilot projects were so promising that the programme has since been expanded to 21 sites throughout the West Bank. In each place, farmers who have an income near or below the poverty line must contribute up to a quarter of the funds for the purchase of machinery and other tools. The work of clearing the land and building retaining walls into the hillsides is paid for by UNDP, generating thousands of hours of employment for day labourers.

By the end of the 1999, the project will have expanded into a US$6 million programme, all funded by the Government of Japan. With evidence of healthy returns, another $4 million is expected for the project—half from Canada and half from Italy.

"This project has high employment generation, but there's also an important element of sustainability," says Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of the UNDP Administrator in Jerusalem.

Workers clearing land for farming.

"Once the land is cleared, the farmers will use it for generations. There's a cultural aspect to it, too, because of the traditional Palestinian attachment to the land. There's a higher degree of ownership in this—it's not just a handout."

Families return to their roots

Here in Halhoul, the impact is deep and wide. This is the biggest of all 16 projects, encompassing 330 *dunams* (about 82 acres) that are shared by 58 families. Those families belong to 10 different *hamules*, or clans, in the village. So in a

A DESERT BLOOMS WITH LIFE AND HOPE

Um Amar harvests vegetables which were rarely grown before the UNDP project started.

town of 25,000, about half of the village is represented in the project.

The lives of Um Amar and Abu Amar are already changing. As she walks through the fledging crops, Um Amar speaks about what it means to be working the land as she did as a child. "My land is a paradise, and when we're away from it too long we go crazy," says Um Amar, a stout woman with deep lines of sun and time on her face. "This land was dead. To see it like this is like seeing a dead man come to life again."

Having left the West Bank to work in Kuwait as a teacher in the 1970s, Abu Amar returned home in the 1980s to find that job opportunities for Palestinians were almost exclusively in Israel. Later, most of the couple's six sons and two daughters sought work there as well, since tilling their parents' land held no allure in comparison to wages that could be won in Israel.

Now, says Um Amar, she sees a new optimism in her children. "My oldest son never wanted to work the land, as much as we tried to push him, but now he goes all the time," she says. "If we have good fields, maybe one day he and the others won't need to work in Israel, and we'll build a more independent economy. If you can make a good living here, there is no need to seek work outside the country."

Once, the idea of expanding their production capacity seemed like an impossibility. Besides the large financial investment it would entail, some of the land looks only a shade more fertile than the nearby desert. "This land was so hard and rocky," says Abu Amar, "that we thought no human or animal could live on it."

From olives to tomatoes

Further complicating matters, Palestinian farmers have tended to rely on their national symbol, the olive tree, as a staple crop. Picturesque and popular as they are, it takes many years of growth before they begin to produce. Even then, they yield a significant crop only every other year. At harvest time, the flood of olives on the market drives prices down, in effect netting relatively low profits for the farmers. Many joke that it's a lazy man's way to farm: the self-sufficient olive trees hardly generate employment because they require very little watering or tending, and the harvesting process usually consists of simply shaking the tree and letting the olives fall onto a blanket below.

"We had one applicant who insisted that he wanted to plant only olive trees, and we had to turn him down," says Abdallah Allaham, a programme management officer at the Agriculture, Rural and Economic Development Unit of UNDP. "But the mentality is changing." Like investors who must diversify their portfolio, many Palestinians have begun to be convinced of the benefits of increasing their gains and diffusing their risk.

The Abu Asabehs' farmland is a case in point. The apple trees they planted in February are still saplings, and won't be ready to bear fruit until next year at the earliest. But agricultural specialists have encouraged them to make use of the land in the meantime, inter-cropping with a variety of figs, cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini, almonds, peaches, plums and apricots. By summer's end, some of them are beginning to ripen like bright jewels in a treasure chest.

One outcome UNDP did not expect was the project's "ripple effect," notes Kayed Mohammad Janazreh, the project manager in charge of the Halhoul site. In areas close to the UNDP projects, other local residents have begun developing additional farmland with their own resources, seemingly encouraged by the sight of watching their neighbours turn rock and scrub into fields of fruit and vegetables.

The bottom line is that Halhoul is blooming, says Abu Amar, and that's partly because he believes it is blessed. Local legend holds that Jonah of Biblical fame came here and stayed a year, giving the town its name. His spirit, he says, helps protect Halhoul—but so will fertile fields that could make living off the land an option, and living in peace with their neighbours a vested interest. "If we have a stable life and a good income, of course it will help build peace," he says. ■

Ilene R. Prusher is the Jerusalem correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor. *Her work has appeared in several publications including* Newsday, Philadelphia Inquirer, Financial Times *and* Jerusalem Report.

ACTION AGAINST HIDDEN KILLERS HELPS LAOS

Text and Photographs by Matthew Pennington

Attapeu Province, Laos—In the shadow of the vast Bolovens Plateau, where the Ho Chi Minh trail once snaked through dense forest in southern Laos, remnants of a secret war corrode silently in the rain. Cluster bombs, artillery shells and landmines litter the untamed terrain, waiting to explode.

In the paddy fields where villagers grow rice, and in the jungles where they gather firewood, families are still reaping the deadly consequences of military overkill during the Indochina War, which ended 25 years ago. Ground battles and nine years of some of the heaviest bombing in the history of modern warfare have left one of Asia's poorest countries prey to the past.

For the past dozen years, local farmer and father of five, Impone Vongkiochan, 38, has been ploughing around the problem. The top of a two-metre long 500 lb bomb dropped from a US jet fighter plane in 1972 pokes out of the mud of his paddy field near his home in Ban Sok in Attapeu province. The primed fuse sits above the surface like a small flowerpot. Every rainy season, he has guided an ungainly water buffalo delicately around it, aware that a misplaced hoof might detonate enough of the bomb to obliterate him, blast a crater eight metres across and fire hot shrapnel in every direction.

Impone knows the risks. He lost one

Overall view of UXO impact in Lao PDR.

brother who kicked a cluster bomb on a forest path when taking livestock to graze in 1977. It exploded, killing him instantly. "I was afraid to extend my land after that," he said, "but I decided to take my chances here."

The remnants of a deadly war

A quarter of all villagers in Laos still suffer the daily menace of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Much of it is left over from the clandestine aerial bombardment of the North Vietnamese secret supply line, known as the Ho Chi Minh trail, which wound through the rugged countryside of Laos on the way to southern Viet Nam. This ordeal gave Laos—a country where nearly half of the 4.8 million people still live in poverty—a rare and tragic distinction: it became, per capita, the most-bombed nation on earth.

Until five years ago, there had been no systematic international response, although the immensity of this humanitarian disaster was beyond dispute. Up to 30 percent of the over two million tonnes of bombs the United States dropped on Laos between 1964 and 1973 had failed to detonate—presenting not only a threat to life, but a danger to farmers struggling to grow enough food to get by.

In 1995, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognized the need to assist the Lao government develop a national capacity for UXO clearance and community awareness. Kari Nordheim-Larsen, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Laos, explained, "With a small financial input from UNDP core resources, UNICEF and the Lao government set up a Trust Fund to attract international donor support to develop a mine action programme owned and implemented by the Lao government."

The international community takes notice

The response of donors and government was impressive. Three and a half years after UXO LAO was set up in early 1996, the national agency is operational in half of the provinces in the country. It has a staff of more than 1,000, making it one of Lao People's Democratic Republic's largest employers. It is responsible for all UXO-related activities, and works in partnership with six international non-governmental organizations that provide for technical advisors in the field. The programme encompasses community education, survey, training and clearance operations.

In addition to the US$2 million of UNDP core resources provided during the first three years to get the programme on its feet, UNDP has been prominent in resource mobilization and in managing the trust fund. In the process it is helping the Lao government build its capacity to cope with the complexities of managing multi-donor support for the expanding UXO LAO programme.

Annual donor contributions of cash and in-kind assistance are currently around $15 million. These funds support the training of deminers by the US military near the Lao capital Vientiane, and operations in nine of the country's 18 provinces. The projects are implemented by: the German demining company, Gerbera, the Mines Advisory Group, Handicap International (Belgium), World Vision Australia, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the Belgian military. With this technical assistance, Lao deminers found and destroyed over 40,000 live UXO in the first six months of 1999 alone, and community awareness teams reached more than 85,000 adults and children.

Saving lives and livelihoods

Nordheim-Larsen said the UN system has played a leading role in raising awareness about a problem that not only takes many lives each year, but also remains a major constraint on development. "The Lao people have suffered from UXO for 25 years. The role we played helped put this issue on the international agenda and build a national capacity to respond to it. UXO LAO is now freeing lands for farmers to feed their families and clearing school yards so children can play in safety," she said.

Untold areas of prized farmland in this rugged country are contaminated. Every swing of a hoe carries the risk of contact with a cluster bomb—known locally as a "bombie"—that has the destructive power to kill at a range of over 50 metres. It is these anti-personnel munitions which have caused most of the 11,000 ordnance accidents that have killed close to 6,000 people and maimed thousands more since the bombing ended. About a third of the victims were children.

For mothers like Mrs. Tat, 37 (many people in Laos go by one name), whose five children live in a stilted wooden lean-to that backs onto bombie-strewn scrub along the path of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Attapeu's Phouvong district, the risk is ever present. A cursory search by NPA's senior technical advisor Peter Gammon located three aluminium tubes, each packed with a dozen yellow BLU 24 (bomb live units) bomblets, ferreted away inside a dead tree stump.

"The children go hunting and play there. I tell them to take care, but of course I'm frightened they will die," she said. "I can't even cook or light a fire around the house because I don't know what lies underneath." Heating the ground could detonate a buried explosive.

The deadly residue of the hi-tech war is in sharp contrast to the uncomplicated rural lifestyle of the Lao Theung minorities who inhabit what is one of the poorest regions in Laos. They cultivate rice and maize, tend buffalo and hunt in the forests. Health care in an area with chronic malaria is poor. Educational opportunities are few—especially for girls who often do not speak the national language of the lowland Lao.

The average per capita production of rice is just 180 kilogrammes—far short of the sustenance level of 300 kilogrammes recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization. "The UXO limits the land people can farm," explained Phoungeun Keomany, the provincial director of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

Villagers have developed their own ad hoc ways of coping with UXO. Bombies have been plucked from rice fields and settlements at deadly risk and put in a "safe place."

Now the days of daring self-help are drawing to a close. UXO LAO began working in Attapeu in June 1998 and has 60 local deminers in the field, assisted by two UXO experts funded by NPA. One team roves around villages, locating and destroying surface UXO, while other teams clear high-priority sites identified by the provincial authorities.

Top of the list for clearance was the site of the school which Mrs. Tat's children attend in the Phouvong district, where 20 days of painstaking search with detectors had already unearthed 15 bombies buried in the shallow laterite soil behind the classrooms. "This area is for kids, so it's a very important place to clear," said deminer Suchai Keonakone, 38. "The school will be here as long as the village is. We're really clearing it not just for safety today, but for future generations."

Creating awareness about the hidden killers

To hammer the message home, a UXO LAO community awareness team spent a week in the village, using video, puppet shows and drama to educate people of all ages. Over 300 people crowded into the dirt-floored schoolhouse for a recent performance, which culminated in a raucous play about a rice-whisky-drinking ne'er-do-well who tries to take apart a bomb.

The reaction of the villagers—from the minority Oi tribe—was one of rapt attention, alternating with great hilarity as the main protagonist died a bloody death. It's an unerring response, but team leader Kongsy Vongsavanh, 43, said that comedy is an effective way of getting a grave message across. "When the drama's over, we get serious. The message is simple. Touch or open UXO and you will die."

The team gives special attention to educating children born long after the war ended, who least understand the dangers and may unwittingly play with UXO. Of the 81 recorded UXO accident victims in Laos in the first six months of 1999, 50 were children. Yet Phil Bean, UXO LAO chief technical advisor is upbeat, seeing a major improvement in living conditions and safety in Laos over the past five years. "But this is risk reduction, not risk removal," he cautions. "A lot of areas where munitions lie are not high priority yet, because nobody is living there, but as the population grows, this will change." Laos' population is expected to double in less than 30 years.

A critical need to sustain the programme

So the need for a long-term response to the UXO threat is paramount—and sound foundations have been laid. By the end of 1999, Lao nationals will be taking over the role of instructors for basic demining courses—initially done by US military staff. It is hoped there will be enough trained Lao experts to run all technical operations by the end of 2003.

UXO LAO roving team member near Ban Sok. Loud hailer used to ward off hunters before explosion. (Below) UXO clearance in schoolyard, Phouvong district in Attapeu.

In a country heavily dependent on foreign aid, financial sustainability is another question. The United States is funding a study into how UXO LAO might diversify into "reimbursable" demining for major development projects or even commercial bomb clearance. In the short term, UNDP trust fund manager Kerry Shegog is waiting to see how the pull on donor funds posed by the crisis in Kosovo will affect the programme. "We've had reassurances from quite a few donors not to get too worried, now that the programme has been built up, they don't want to see it roll back," she said. "This year we've got far more grassroots input than ever before. We are also trying to draw in more ministries at the provincial level—in health, education and agriculture—to get them all involved in the planning process," Shegog added.

"The Lao never asked for the bombs," concluded Nordheim-Larsen. "We should not forget that this is one of the least developed countries in Asia, with huge needs everywhere you look. But more than for any other aspect of development, the international community has a responsibility to tackle the UXO problem, to make this country livable again." ■

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KOSOVO

By Erin Trowbridge

Pec, Kosovo—The tragedy, slaughter and destruction that racked Kosovo are well known, but the rehabilitation of the people living and working here will continue for some time. Hundreds of thousands of refugees returned to find their homes in ruins, their relatives gone and their futures uncertain. Although months have passed and order has begun to be restored, the conflicts—both personal and political—that face the people living in Kosovo still loom large.

Since the peace agreement was signed in June 1999, more than half a million people have returned to live in Kosovo. For most, coming home means returning to the mere shell of a house, or to bits of rock, stone, brick and mortar that once comprised the structure of their homes. For those who are concerned with development and the reconstruction of Kosovo, rebuilding is the most immediate challenge.

In July, Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), traveled to the Balkan region, only weeks into his appointment as head of the organization, to survey the damage for himself and see what could be done to help the people living here. As he walked through Pec, a small village in the western part of Kosovo that suffered some of the worst damage during the conflict, Malloch Brown talked with local families, looked at the remains of homes and mosques, and said that housing must be the first priority.

"One of my reasons for coming here was to find out what we could do immediately," said Malloch Brown in Pristina, after travelling through Kosovo all day. "I came here early in my term because already there is a discernable gap emerging between redevelopment programmes and resettlement of the refugees. One of the most pertinent questions I have is how can we get construction under way before winter comes and the temperature drops. The key thing that international agencies need to focus on is getting roofs over people's heads before it gets too cold."

Indeed, the town of Pec has been almost completely gutted. Rubble lines the streets in places where buildings used to be. Some piles are clearly the remains of homes—consisting of shattered windows, legless dolls, crushed soda cans, bed frames, torn dresses and shredded curtains. Nearby, what was once a small office building is, today, just four walls, filled inside with waist-high piles of mortar, bricks, cans, boxes, tins and shards of glass.

One certain fact about Pec is that there has been considerable damage. The politics, authority, victims and assailants may change daily, but for the time being the destruction remains the same. Despite the infrastructural wasteland that now defines the southeastern region of Serbia, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians who fled the region under Serb attack have left the refugee camps and returned to their homelands. They find their houses in ruins and their family businesses razed, but they say they are here to stay.

"We left on a Sunday and on the following Friday the killings started. It was the end of April," said Gezim Daci, a father of four, who had returned to Pec in July. He was standing in front of the hollowed-out shell of a building that he said had been his home. "We were staying with family in Albania until the peace agreement was signed. I think we all knew we would find our homes and

(Above) Rubble, rebuilding and picking up the pieces.

REBUILDING LIVELIHOODS

towns looking like this. But knowing it from afar and actually trying to rebuild are two different things. This will take time," he said, surveying the damage. "This won't be easy. But, we aren't thinking of leaving again. This is our home."

All over Pec young men and old stood with shovels in hand and wheelbarrows nearby, clearing up the crumbled walls and beams and preparing to start building. Everywhere people worked fast and furious, eager to have their homes before winter sets in.

The crisis has drawn international attention, and aid agencies from all over the world have contributed billions of dollars to help rebuild the disputed territory. Already, makeshift schools and hospitals are being set up. Aid agencies have come in with shelters made of walls and roofs that look like old garage doors to give temporary refuge from rain and cold. Pristina has become a centre not only of political reconfiguring, but also of developmental ingenuity.

Soon after Malloch Brown's return to New York in July, UNDP committed funds and technical assistance to help rebuild Kosovo. The comprehensive, overall UNDP programme, called the Kosovo Recovery Programme, was initiated with seed funding of US$3 million. The funds will be used towards shelter repair, community development, micro-credit schemes, income-generating projects and rehabilitation of the social infrastructure.

Within a month, UNDP had targeted the village of Cabra, where not a single home was left standing after the Kosovo conflict. The organization began work on a reconstruction programme in Cabra financed with $5 million from the European Commission. Similar programmes started in other villages are estimated to provide 10,000 jobs. Cleaning up towns and repairing infrastructure will also provide jobs and incomes for those who have lost everything. According to UNDP spokespersons, one of the goals in Cabra is to reach unemployed youth, demobilized soldiers and others affected by the war.

This sort of rehabilitation programme is exactly what Malloch Brown considers an ideal conduit for UNDP aid. The organization, he says, can be most effective as a confidant of governments and a coordinator among the local government, international donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field. He has stressed this role for the organization because of its decades-long presence in countries throughout the world. Indeed, UNDP programmes in nearby Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia are meeting development demands with creative solutions, as well as coordinating with other international aid agencies to ensure that new projects meet the needs and demands of the local people.

"To be effective, especially in Kosovo, we have to question how to go beyond playing a limited role for a limited time," said Malloch Brown. "We have to question how we can exert influence beyond the money that we have to invest. We should see UNDP as a go-between organization in the international framework where we can help other donors, NGOs and government institutions work out their agendas and priorities in a coherent way."

Kosovo may well prove to be the place where the development programmes and philosophies for the next millennium are born. Already, international aid agencies have stressed the need to move from handouts to training and self-sufficiency. UNDP has begun work to rebuild villages and create temporary employment. Before leaving Kosovo, Malloch Brown also committed UNDP funding that would go towards ensuring a free media—a relief to people who have not had access to a free flow of information for many years.

According to the Administrator, having reliable news reports and knowing what is happening helps people to make informed decisions about what they need. He stressed the need for UNDP to realize its own priorities and ensure that work carried out at the field level is of a quality that can be maintained and sustained when it is handed over to the local community. ■

Mark Malloch Brown talks to a father and son who are rebuilding their home in Pec.

Erin Trowbridge, a former senior correspondent for The Earth Times, *has written on issues of sustainable development and UNDP programmes in countries throughout the world. She is currently with the Division of Public Affairs, UNDP.*

BURUNDI: WORKING TOWARDS PEACE

By David Gough

Ruyigi, Burundi—The rhythm of the dance comes from the percussive thud of the dancers' feet and the jangle of metal shells tied around their ankles. In unison—left foot forward, right foot back. They turn hypnotically on the toes of the right foot, stirring up dust clouds that billow around their knees. Heads back, shoulders up.

A crack of thunder peels open the lead grey skies overhead and rain beats down, stirring slurry beneath their feet. "Those who destroy and kill should stop their evil," shouts Thomas Sendeyeya, a village elder, and the dancers echo their approval. It is their final rehearsal for *The Peace and Reconciliation Festival*, which begins the following day, and Sendeyeya is happy with the performance. He says that the dance is called the *Intore;* it means the army of the kings. "This used to be a war dance," said Sendeyeya, "now it's a peace dance."

The festival, organized by the British non-governmental organization (NGO) Action Aid with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is one of a series of new and innovative development projects being implemented in Burundi to build peace and reconciliation.

Burundi has been torn apart by six years of ethnic strife—conflict that has sent the country spiraling down the Human Development Index, published annually in the Human Development Report. Vaccination coverage is down from 83 percent in 1993 to little over 50 percent today; primary school attendance has fallen from 73 percent to 53 percent; and infant mortality now stands at 136 deaths per 1,000.

Partnerships for peace and development

UNDP has embarked on a major two-year community assistance programme designed to spur development. "The war has left Burundi without the means to address its most basic development needs. If the country is to achieve durable peace we must support development efforts," says UNDP's Programme Director Jacques Bandelier.

Based on the ongoing work of NGOs and buoyed by the success of an 18-month UNDP pilot project, the goal is to contribute to social cohesion and to consolidate the gains of peace in rural communities. Its objectives are to enable rural communities to regain their livelihoods, increase their access to basic services such as clean water, revive decision-making processes and help society reabsorb the uprooted population. "The approach is based on a sustainable concept of resettlement developed last year by the UN system and its partners," said Bandelier.

In the northern province of Cibitoke, UNDP has launched projects in partnership with the Italian NGO Inter SOS. Cibitoke has seen some of the worst excesses of violence during Burundi's civil war, which left the vast majority of its population living in the surrounding forests or in camps. "We used to have to go there in an armoured car," said Bandelier, "but security has improved greatly, and the US$140,000 we have spent there so far has produced enormous value for the money."

The market town of Murwi in Cibitoke has seen dramatic change. Inter SOS has organized local communities into committees to help returnees rebuild their houses and establish income-generating schemes, such as the flour mill they have built in the town's market square. "A year ago this market was deserted," said Massimo Turato, Inter SOS Director, pointing towards row after row of market stalls. "Now on market days, it's a hive of activity."

Fifteen thousand people have benefited from the Murwi project so far, and more than a 1,000 new houses have been built. "In cooperation with UNDP, Inter SOS has helped us very much," said Samuel Korukwishaka as he stood in the doorway of his new home. He is particularly proud of the corrugated iron roof. "We organized all the site planning for these houses and the digging of the foundations. We received assistance for those things we could not get on our own."

UNDP plans to collaborate with partners like Inter SOS and Action Aid for the two-year programme because they provide access to expertise built up over decades of working in Burundi. Partnership also allows for cost sharing, with structure and administrative costs to be covered by the partner, thereby allowing allocated UNDP funds to go directly to the specified project. Encouraging the active participation of the beneficiaries further reduces costs.

Healing the scars of war

The resettlement of people in their communities is the backbone of the project. "There is still enormous mistrust between Hutu and Tutsi communities. Many people are seriously traumatized by the violence and in many cases know who in their community perpetrated these crimes," said Armand Nzeyimana, who worked for Action Aid in Ruyigi province for years before joining UNDP to assist in the umbrella project.

"By encouraging the establishment of committees we are encouraging the restoration of traditional values of cooperation. These values stood Burundi in good stead for centuries, and it is essential that we restore them if Burundi is to have peace again."

The day after President Melchior Ndadaye's assassination (Burundi's first democratically-elected president, and a Hutu) in 1993, Bazilissa Nizigama, a Tutsi, was working in a banana field. "One of my neighbours came running and told me that the

Rebuilding homes for returnees.

Villagers perform 'Intore' dance in preparation for the Peace Festival.

Hutus were attacking the Tutsis in my village. I ran for two days, hiding from the groups of people carrying machetes and killing. Finally we made it to Tanzania," said Bazilissa, as she stood knee deep in a pit of mud making bricks for the house of a fellow returnee. She then spent two years in a refugee camp before returning to Burundi. "My house had been destroyed and it wasn't safe for me to go home, so I spent another year in a camp here in Burundi."

"Education is very important if we want to live together. It teaches people how to tell the difference between good and evil and not just follow what someone else tells them."

Meanwhile, Bazilissa's neighbours had been involved in an Action Aid sensitizing programme, and have helped Bazilissa rebuild her house in the Butaganzwa commune. Bazilissa said she wasn't sure who had destroyed her home, but she believes that it was the same people who later helped her rebuild it. "I can only thank God and Action Aid for my good fortune. I am amazed that the people who destroyed my house, because I am a Tutsi, are the same people who rebuilt it. Now by helping build houses for other people, I am repaying them for their help."

In Bazilissa's neighbouring village 60-year-old Ezebe Murekambanze stands outside the recently renovated Biyorwa Primary School. He never went to school himself but as a community elder is pushing for the construction of a secondary school in his village. "Education is very important if we want to live together. It teaches people how to tell the difference between good and evil and not just follow what someone else tells them."

The UNDP umbrella programme and associated projects have already made significant progress in Ruyigi province, but there is still much to be done and half the envisaged cost of the programme is yet to be realized. Josiane Rigaud-Marcelin, UNDP's Programme Development Officer in Burundi, says that most of the funding for the umbrella programme will come from non-core resources. Core funding, by which UNDP receives non-targeted funds from donors, is decreasing. Ninety percent of UNDP's core funding is spent in countries with an annual per capita income of less than $750. With an annual per capita income of $134 in 1997, Burundi qualifies easily.

"The dramatic reduction in core funding certainly makes these projects more difficult to finance, and competition for non-core dollars is very fierce," said Rigaud-Marcelin. Of the $12 million needed to finance this programme only $600,000 will come from core resources. So far, contributions from Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland have raised $6.5 million.

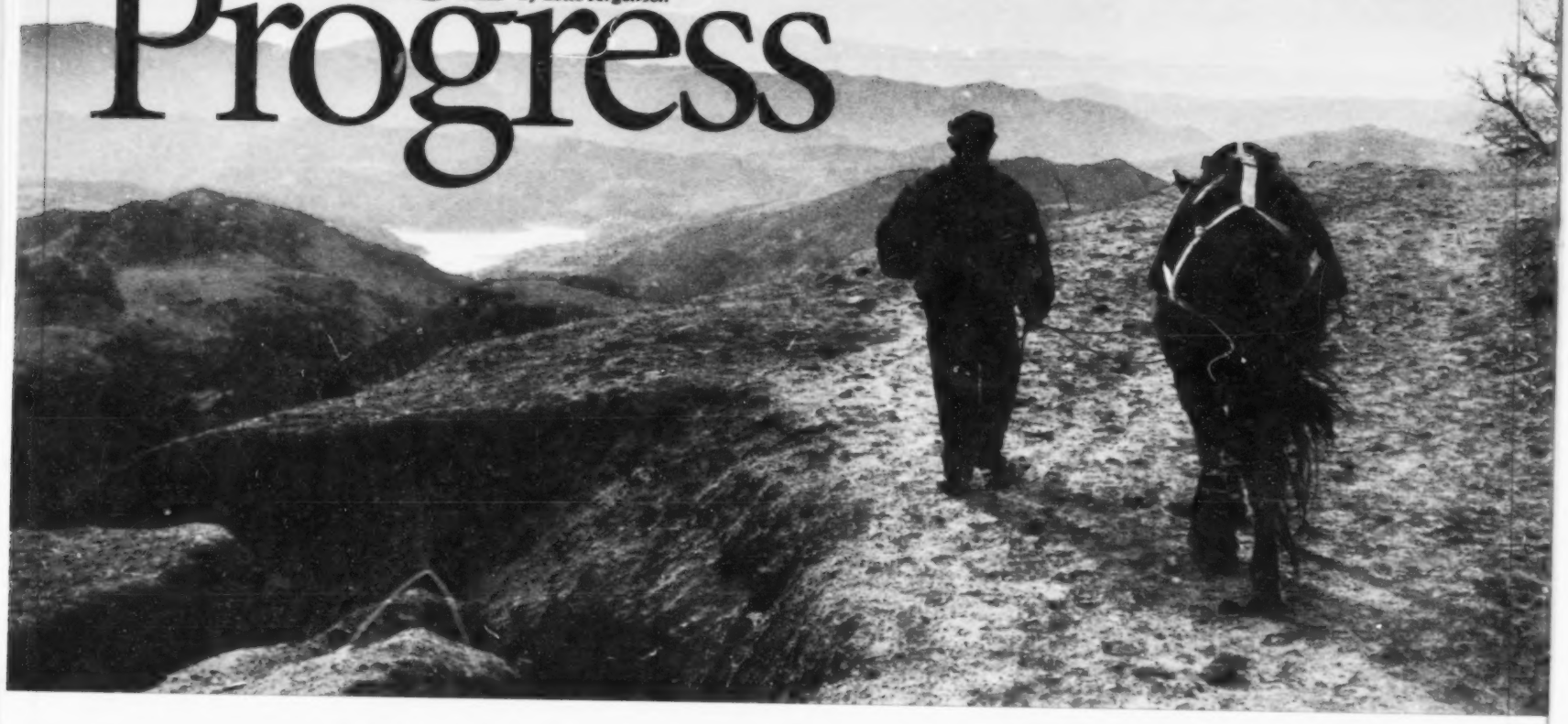
Burundi's predicament is further aggravated by the suspension of most foreign aid dependent on political progress towards peace. In 1992, Burundi received $288 million in foreign aid, but by 1997, the figure had fallen to $39 million.

"For peace and stability in Burundi we must have a sustainable resettlement and reintergration programme for the uprooted population. Therefore, we can't wait for peace talks to end before assisting communities and committing to development," said Bandelier. ■

David Gough is the East Africa correspondent for The Guardian.

Giving up Arms for Progress

By Lotte Jorgensen



Muke Benkos gives up his gun for peace and progress.

Gramsh, Albania—On a cold day in February, Albanian farmer Muke Benkos guided his mule up a muddy path to a small village in the central highlands of Albania. The onset of spring had softened the mud, making it even more difficult than usual to navigate the steep slopes.

That day, Benkos's mule carried an unusual cargo on its back—rifles, machine guns and a load of ammunition. Arms like these are nothing spectacular around here, but the mission is. Benkos is handing the weapons over to the local police force.

On 26 January this year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated its first-ever attempt to collect arms as a means of restoring public order and reducing the risk of political confrontations degenerating into armed conflict in Albania. In just one week, the voluntary surrender of weapons garnered about 400 weapons and quantities of ammunition. An important reason for the significant public support for the arms collection effort was the assistance that villagers were promised. In return for surrendering guns and stolen ammunition, UNDP was to improve living conditions in this poor mountain region.

"Weapons in Exchange for Development" was conceived by the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs in June 1998 because the spread of weapons was considered one of the most critical problems facing Albania. At the same time Albania was undergoing an economic downturn that made it one of the poorest countries in the Northern Hemisphere. "There was a desperate need for any kind of assistance in this country," explains former UNDP project manager Philip Peirce.

Growing anarchy

Social and economic upheavals had been growing in Albania, when in early 1997, the country woke up to the collapse of the so-called pyramid schemes. Many Albanians had put all their savings in these schemes that offered high returns. But instead of handing over a profitable return on those investments, the people running the schemes took all the money and fled the country. The collapse of the schemes led to large-scale looting, and Albania became the victim of criminal elements and widespread armed violence. This is thought to have been the cause that led furious civilians to attack and loot army depots all over the country.

According to government estimates, more than half a million weapons—semi-automatic guns, 3.5 million hand grenades and 1.25 million land mines—fell into the hands of the civilian population. They were tempting commodities

for poor people to sell, making Albania a conduit for the easy supply of weapons to armed conflicts in the region. An attempted coup d'etat in September 1998 clearly demonstrated the need to reduce the risk of armed violence and to restore public order.

In the Gramsh district alone, 57 people, including children, have been killed in armed conflict, and more than 600 have been wounded since March 1997. Along with a universal desire to restore peace in the country, the heavy tolls attributed to weapons played an important role in convincing people to turn in their arms.

"I stole a gun from the army depot in Gramsh to protect my family. If peace prevails, I won't need to protect my family any more. That's why I am ready to hand over my gun," explains Benkos. Outside a village school, other villagers unloaded their cargo of weapons—more than a 100 rifles and machine guns.

Building confidence

"Getting public support for voluntary disarmament and addressing crucial development issues was a difficult challenge," said Jan Wahlberg, UNDP's Resident Representative, "especially in view of the danger of giving the wrong impression—that the project would reward people who had in fact stolen government property."

"But given the Albanian situation, its past history and the very real poverty which exists in this country, it was felt that a programme that offered collective benefits in return for collective responsibilities would be justified," said Wahlberg.

The close cooperation of local people with the police in the Gramsh district was evident in the police station in Gramsh town. Chief of Police Sinan Metaj showed off a storage room filled with rifles, machine guns, shells, grenades and quantities of ammunition. All arms will be registered—looted and private weapons alike—and taken into military custody. Some of the weapons will be returned to the armed forces, while the rest of the weapons, including the ammunition will be destroyed.

That was in February 1999. By summer the war in neighbouring Kosovo had forced thousands of ethnic Albanians to flee into Albania. Again, the situation seriously destabilized Albania, forcing the project to temporary halt its weapon collections. However, the development work still carried on. In June, arms collections started up again, facing a situation where help to improve living conditions was now needed even more than before.

Weapons are returned at the local police station in Gramsh.

Keeping promises

Despite the unforeseen situation of the Kosovo war and the influx of refugees, UNDP was able to deliver on its promises. In return for a total of 5,770 weapons and more than 100 tons of ammunition that have been collected to date, all of a 100 villages in Gramsh district have now been connected by telephone. The telephone lines give villagers access to assistance from the police and the health-care system, paving the way for a genuine feeling of security and a strengthened social network. Street lighting has been provided for the town of Gramsh, and many stretches of road have been built or reinforced in order to connect remote villages to the rest of the district.

The budget for the project was US$2 million. UNDP committed $550,000 from its core resources. Other donors included the Governments of Andorra, Belgium, Japan and Italy. The United Kingdom provided two senior technical officers to assist with the security aspect of the programme. Save the Children, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Fund for Women contributed funds and equipment.

Development assistance is still in heavy demand, not only in Gramsh but all over Albania. Approximately 80 percent of the weapons that were estimated to be in Gramsh have been collected. And the crime rate has actually gone down. "I strongly believe that we have been successful not only in collecting the weapons, but, more importantly, in educating people on the dangers a militarized civilian population introduces to the normal development process of a country," said Wahlberg. ■

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ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

On 17 September 1999, the people of Gramsh celebrated the successful completion of the "Weapons in Exchange for Development" pilot project initiated by UNDP. The dignitaries present included President Rexhep Meidani of Albania and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala. They were greeted enthusiastically by children waving Albanian and UN flags in the Gramsh town square, which was packed with people in a festive mood.

"The underlying message of the Gramsh experiment is simple," Dhanapala said, "Give a community a better chance for development and it would be willing to discard its weapons. Raise a community's stake in peace and it would be more willing to shun violence." In his address he told the young people to "put their shoulders to the wheels and earn the future they deserve, a future free of violence and full of economic opportunity." The President and Dhanapala unveiled a plaque in the town square commemorating the completion of the project, which will serve as an example for similar efforts in the rest of Albania and around the world. —* *Sikku Wahlberg***

Prison Reform

A STEP FORWARD FOR HAITI

By Sara Ann Friedman

Port-au-Prince, Haiti—A noisy crowd crushed up against the iron gate and spilled out into the street. Mostly women and children, many carrying bags of food and clothing, they had been waiting for hours in the sweltering heat. It was visiting day at Haiti's National Penitentiary for men, which houses nearly 1,800 inmates, or 42 percent of Haiti's total prison population. It is the largest of the country's 19 prisons. Visiting days occur twice a week, for 20 minutes.

When the gate finally opened, the guards stepped aside to avoid the rush of families anxious to make contact with husbands, brothers, sons and lovers. The scene was disorderly, even chaotic, but a far cry from a long history in which prisons were Haiti's heart of darkness, terror, isolation and disappearance.

Visitation rights are among the many significant improvements in the National Penitentiary since 1995, advances that are part and parcel of Haiti's new programme of prison reform. Since 1804, Haiti's justice system had been under military control. The army acted as police and prison guard, judge and jury, defining the crime, handing down the sentence, and meting out punishment without accountability. For the past 50 years, Haiti's prisons were notorious for human rights violations ranging from isolation and deliberate starvation to torture and murder.

On Haitian President Bertrand Aristide's return from exile in 1994, the rule of law and justice—including a separation of police, courts and prisons from the military and from each other—became a top priority. By formal decree in 1995, the military was abolished, and a civilian prison administration was created and placed under the Ministry of Justice. In 1997 prisons were put under police jurisdiction, as required by Haiti's 1986 constitution, and the Ministry of Justice approached the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help create a new and humane prison system, from the bottom up. The opportunity was welcomed by UNDP, as building

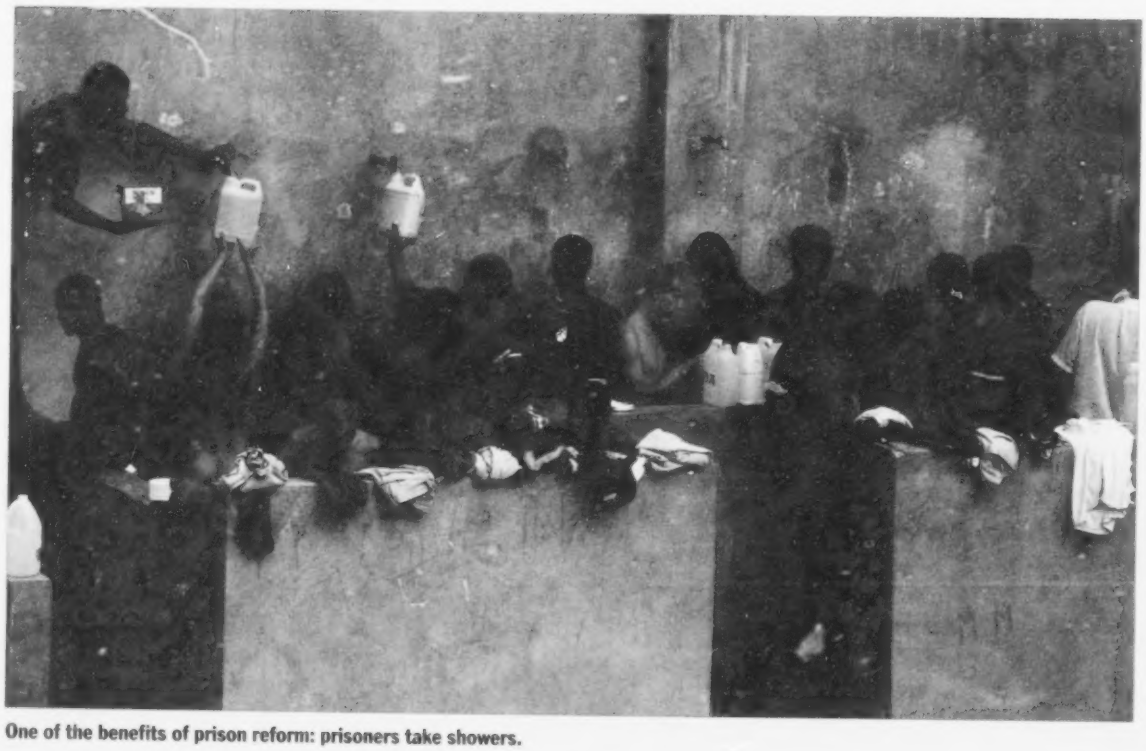
democratic institutions and sustaining peace is central to its mandate.

Human rights a top priority

The resulting US$4.5 million prison reform project for Haiti was financed by UNDP and the Governments of France, Haiti and the United States, with technical support from MICIVIH (International Civilian Mission in Haiti), the UN mission responsible for monitoring human rights. From the beginning, French prison director Pierre Delattre and Canadian Jean Paul Lupien from UNDP headed the project, which is credited by Haitians for achieving "small miracles" in a very short time.

"When we arrived four years ago," explains Lupien, "we had to start completely from scratch." Prisoners were crowded into small, dark, airless cells. They slept on the floor and defecated into the same buckets they used to wash themselves—when there was water. There was no medical care or dispensary, no prison plan, and an absence of any schedules or regulations.

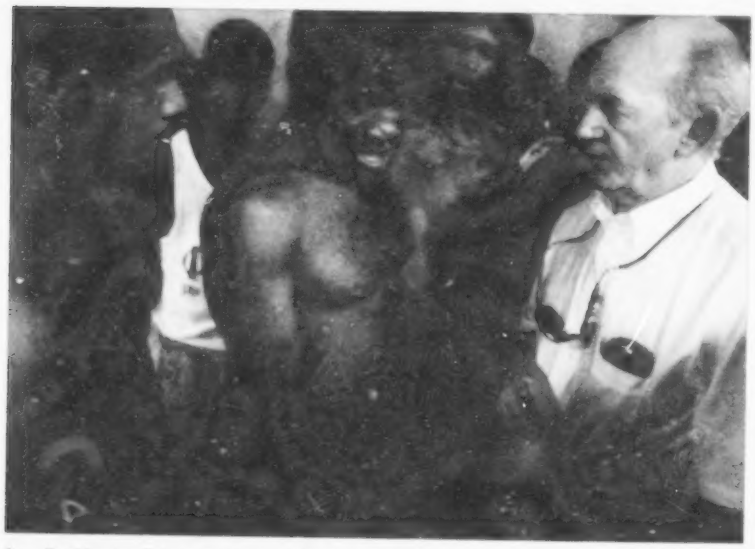
Working with the International Red Cross, the Dutch non-governmental organization Bureau de nutrition et de développement and other groups, Delattre and Lupien helped to create new prison infrastructure and more humane conditions. Nutrition and nursing staff were hired. A kitchen, a medical dispensary and an infirmary, showers and toilets, as well as recreation yards and visiting areas were installed. A large new concrete structure, dubbed the *Titanic* by inmates, was built to ease overcrowding and provide light and air. "If 1994 was midnight," says Jean-Marie Franck, the National Penitentiary's Director of Operations, "1999 is noon."



One of the benefits of prison reform: prisoners take showers.

Human rights training for those dealing with the prisoners has been a core component, as well as one of the most successful elements, of the project. UNDP provided more than 180 prison guard recruits with basic training; 320 prison guards received on-the-job training. The project also financed a training centre, institutional manuals and training modules. Some Haitians were taught to become trainers, while others were sent to Canada to learn prison management and security. Thirty-two prison supervisors received training at French prisons in French Guiana, Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Two-thirds of the 500 new recruits were from the military, which presented a major challenge and led trainers to emphasis to their students the need to develop new attitudes about the rights of prisoners, as well as new techniques (free from excessive or arbitrary force) for conflict resolution, self-defence and security.



Jean Paul Lupien listens to the complaints of the prisoners.

The prisoners show no fear of complaining in front of guards. Several tell their stories. Most striking are their expressions of isolation and of urgent need for a court appearance.

Charles Shaelana, a supervisor of guards at the National Penitentiary for men, is a former military man and among the first trained by French experts. He is impressed by the great changes that have taken place. Before, he says, prisoners were beaten all the time and were treated as garbage. Now, guards carry whistles instead of sticks or firearms, and the prisoners are treated as human beings who have committed crimes but who also have rights—to go to the toilet, to eat every day, to have recreation and visitors.

Shaelana says he is not afraid to be unarmed because he has learned how to handle aggressive prisoners, and there is a support system in place that can react quickly. Not one inmate, he adds, has been killed since he came to the prison.

One step at a time

Inside the penitentiary prisoners are housed in large dormitories rather than cells and do not wear prison uniforms. In the area still to be rehabilitated, 300 prisoners are crowded into a barracks-like cell that is dark and stifling—with one tiny door and only 30 beds. The newer three-floor *Titanic* is, by comparison, light, airy and comfortable.

Outnumbered by 15 to one, uniformed guards, like Shaelana, are alert but not threatening. There are no barriers or weapons separating them from the prisoners. The prisoners show no fear of complaining in front of guards. Several tell their stories. Most striking are their expressions of isolation and of urgent need for a court appearance. Charged with crimes ranging from minor theft to murder, most have been in prison from 10 months to four years without trial.

Tilius Nest, 50, was arrested in his bed for the murder of a man he said he did not even know; the police beat him for three days, and he has been in jail for three years without appearing in court. Emanuel Whitman, 21, was incarcerated 10 months ago by his mother, who said he was "wicked and dangerous." He had broken a window. Bertroi Flersecuis, accused of stealing some electronic equipment from his job, has been in prison for three years without a trial.

For the record

UNDP's Lupien is known for his low-keyed, informal and respectful manner, with prisoners as well as politicians. He has a reputation as a man who gets things done. High on his list of urgent prison reforms was a manual system of record keeping—something as basic as knowing who is in prison, for what, and for how long.

Prisoners relaxing in the sun.

Prisons are only one of three links in the chain of justice, which also includes the tribunals and the police.

A large register is now filled with a handwritten file and number for each prisoner, noting his identity, charge, date of incarceration, and name of judge and attorney, if any. This is especially critical in Haiti where, according to MICIVIH, 80 percent of prisoners remain in prison from months to years, accused, but neither tried nor sentenced. One measure of the success of this time-consuming effort was a recent local newspaper article about judges who now visit the penitentiary to locate prisoner files because they have none of their own.

The challenge ahead

The project to reform Haiti's National Penitentiary for men was completed in 1998, with major improvements in infrastructure and living conditions, the creation of new services, a change in attitudes towards inmates and the beginnings of a new prison system. But much remains to be done; the country's 18 other prisons urgently need repair or rebuilding, in large part to ease the pressure on the National Penitentiary. Training in human rights and administration must be continued. "We are not saying that conditions for prisoners are good enough," said Luc Euchére Joseph, Inspecteur Général de la Police, "only that they are heading in a better direction. If the Haitian government stays on track with the support of the international community, it will improve further."

Visiting day: families talk to inmates in a casual atmosphere.

The continuation of Haiti's prison reform project, however, faces a major funding challenge. The projected budget is $6 million over the next three years, but the current financing is only $292,000, which will be exhausted by June 2000. There are no promises of support in the offing.

"This project may well be a victim of its own success," says Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, UNDP's Resident Representative in Haiti. "The persistent success in prison reform has underlined the need for urgent reforms in the non-functional justice system." If judges come to the prison to look at records they should be keeping themselves, he says, that may give a needed push to help the wheels of justice move a little faster. Prisons are only one of three links in the chain of justice, which also includes the tribunals and the police. ■

Sara Ann Friedman is a writer and editor of the newsletter Action for Girls. *She writes on children's and women's issues.*

VOLUNTEERS ASSIST IN AN ELECTION

By Nanette Braun

Casting a ballot for freedom.

East Timor—On 30 August 1999, in a ballot conducted by the United Nations, the overwhelming majority of people in East Timor opted for independence from Indonesia. Yet the peacefully expressed wish for the birth of a nation resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, internal displacement and a mass exodus of refugees beyond the territory's borders. Pro-Indonesian militias, unwilling to accept the decision for independence of almost 90 percent of the population, carried out their threats and turned East Timor into "a sea of fire."

Overall, some 500 UN Volunteers (UNV) served with the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). The played an integral part in fulfilling the UN's commitment to facilitate East Timor's choice for its future. Only UN Volunteers served as district electoral officers at 200 registration centres throughout the territory. As the main point of contact between the people and UNAMET, they registered 438,000 voters in East Timor and conducted civic education programmes and training for the local polling staff. They prepared for and supervised balloting in 850 polling stations.

"It was probably the most difficult mission UNV was ever involved in," said its Executive Coordinator Sharon Capeling-Alakija. "We take immense pride in what the UN Volunteers achieved. They carried out their task against great odds." In a number of areas the political situation became increasingly tense. Because of the lack of infrastructure and roads, travel was slow and exhausting. Malaria was widespread and the accommodation was rudimentary at best.

Yet despite all these difficulties a sense of accomplishment prevailed right up to the ballot. The number of people who registered was far beyond expectations: "The work was tiring, but it was an overwhelming experience," said Dinah Kayumba, a UNV district electoral officer from Zambia, speaking about the 22-day registration period. "When we arrived early in the morning, we would find people sleeping in front of the registration centre. Some of them had walked for more than a day. People would thank us, sometimes even kissing our hands."

Vannary Ing, a volunteer from Cambodia said, "It is similar to what I experienced in my own country. People are enthusiastic to finally have the chance to express their will—they had waited for almost a quarter of a century." The UN had made it possible for him to return to his home country from a refugee camp and to participate in the historic elections in May 1993. "I am happy to be able to give back some of what I received through the UN's involvement," he said.

There was a 98.6 percent voter turnout in East Timor. As early as 4:00 am the streets were lined with people on their way to the polling stations. "I was deeply touched when I saw how many people turned up today. I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else," said Susan Tillou, a volunteer from the US.

UNV electoral officer Michael Nsobani organizes voter registration.

For the elderly it has been a long wait.

Applauding the efforts of the volunteers, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Mark Malloch Brown wrote to Capeling-Alakija, "Once again, you have demonstrated that UNV is an indispensable part of the international system, fielding in record time a large number of volunteers to provide crucial and timely assistance in fulfilling the goals of the United Nations."

UNV participates in development cooperation at the request of UN member states. The organization reports to UNDP and works through the agency's country offices around the world.

Tragically, there wasn't much time to marvel at the courage of the people of East Timor, who had defied threats and intimidation in daring to vote so decisively on their future. For the volunteers working with UNAMET the experience should have been no less an achievement than helping the dream of a people come true—yet it ended in a rude awakening by forces determined to thwart the choice of the people.

After the ballot, the UNVs left East Timor. However, 71 volunteers remained on standby in Darwin, Australia. The International Forces for East Timor, the UN Security Council-mandated peacekeeping force under Australian leadership, were deployed in East Timor to prevent the violence from escalating and to protect the people. The situation is gradually improving and as of 3 November, 60 volunteers had returned to East Timor to serve as civil affairs officers, human rights observers, doctors, nurses and logisticians. ■

Nanette Braun is in charge of the External Relations Group at UNV headquarters in Bonn.

WOMEN & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By Hilda Paqui

Today, it is encouraging to see women such as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and UK's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam spearheading negotiations for conflict settlement between warring parties in Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Northern Ireland. But negotiating peace is by no means a new role for women. As far back as 412 BC, Lysistrata mobilized women on both sides of the Athenian-Spartan war for a sexual strike in order to force men to end hostilities and avert the annihilation of Greece.

Conflict resolution is usually narrowly defined as negotiation for solution to a conflict. In this definition an important phase—the preparatory phase—is overlooked. Yet without this phase, the parties would never reach the point of negotiation. For the present purpose, therefore, I am broadening the scope of conflict resolution to include events leading to negotiations.

Since Lysistrata, women, individually or in groups, have played a critical role in the struggle for justice in societies around the globe. Prominent among them is Rosa Parks, who helped to ignite the Civil Rights Movement in the United States by refusing to surrender her seat to a white man on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. This led to a 382-day bus boycott by 70 percent of the riders that gained national prominence and ultimately led to desegregation.

South Africa's Winnie Madikizela-Mandela helped to break the back of apartheid by keeping the struggle against it on the front pages of newspapers around the world as she endured repeated imprisonment, banishment and other forms of harassment.

Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi—billed as the most recognized and articulate voice of the Palestinian People's struggle—was involved in student uprisings and confrontations with Israeli authorities. When the Intifada began in 1988, she was on the front line reasoning with the Israeli soldiers and articulating the feelings of an occupied nation.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Latin American women were visible participants in the political opposition to military rule as individuals and as part of a range of movements, including Argentina's Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, El Salvador's Comadres and Guatemala's Conavigua Widows. More recently, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, subjected to house arrest for six years, was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize for "striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnic reconciliation by peaceful means."

But once the struggle for justice is over, women are often relegated to the sidelines or represented at the negotiating table by proxy. This means that issues of special interest to women are neglected during the important stages of policy determination and formulation. How can a government or constitution so formulated claim political legitimacy?

Women in Latin America gained political clout because they were visible participants in developing new agendas for transition from autocracy to democracy. Gender issues were included in new constitutions and policies. Among the changes institutionalized was the creation of women's ministries. Brazilians established experimental councils on the status of women to initiate and review legislature proposals. Special police stations were staffed to aid women victims of rape or abuse. Several constitutional initiatives and changes in marriage and family law were institutionalized and national legislation was enacted to impose gender quotas, assuring greater representation of women.

Despite these and other demonstrated benefits of involving women in all phases of conflict resolution, "the generally accepted wisdom is that men negotiate peace and women build it," said a British Member of Parliament, Jackie Ballard. Yet women are particularly well equipped to negotiate settlements because "Men tend to go into negotiations expecting one side to win and the other to lose. Women look for points of commonality and are less afraid to compromise."

In addition, women have well-developed verbal skills, a natural talent for handling people, the ability to embrace ambiguity and a facility for seeing issues in the broader context, as Helen Fisher pointed out in her book, *The First Sex*.

This is why the international community should embrace the efforts of organizations like International Alert, which has launched a campaign to promote women's experiences and perspectives on peace within the international community and to make them central to conflict resolution and peace building.

It will be carried out through an outreach programme with a five point agenda that includes:

- Full participation of women in all aspects of the peace process from the village level to the negotiating table.
- Making gender considerations central to post-conflict rehabilitation and fully mainstreaming gender into reconstruction programmes by enhancing the capacity and ability of women's organizations to engage effectively in development and peace building efforts.
- Promoting the development of specific initiatives that respond to the special needs of women and girls in refugee and internally displaced situations.
- Making justice for women a central component of the reconciliation and peace building processes.
- Creating opportunities for women to become fully involved in governance and leadership.

In the words of Canadian author Matthew Arnold, "If ever the world sees a time when women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit of (hu)mankind, it will be such a power as the world has never known." ■

Hilda Paqui is Chief, Constituency Relations and Operations Branch, Division of Public Affairs at UNDP. She is also a member of UNDP's Gender Advisory Group.

PEACE-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

Thailand's Experience with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

By Asda Jayanama

When former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali added the concept of "peace-building" to the process of preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping in his now famous "Agenda for Peace" in 1992, he was no doubt referring to the post cold-war model of peace-keeping.

Unlike the traditional peace-keeping which usually refers only to the facilitation of cease-fire and disarming of factions, the new type of peace-keeping has to meet the challenges posed by the dislocation and destruction of societies. The programme designed by the United Nations for this new situation is therefore multi-dimensional, and includes such activities as civic, economic, humanitarian and political reconstruction, and in some cases, even the holding of general elections.

On the other hand, many have also recognized that peace-building does not only apply to post-conflict situations but also to pre-conflict nation building. The Secretary-General himself recognized this interpretation when he wrote in "An Agenda for Development" in 1995 that peace was the foundation of development.

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established in February 1992 as just such a multi-dimensional model of peace-keeping. It was also both a post-conflict and a pre-conflict development authority, which had eight components: human rights, military, civil administration, civilian police, repatriation, rehabilitation, elections and information. Authorized by the Security Council in accordance with the principles of the Paris Settlement Agreements of 1991, UNTAC's mandate was to implement the peace by reconstructing Cambodia in civic, humanitarian, political and economic life, with the final objective of establishing a viable democracy.

UNTAC's Cambodian counterpart was the Supreme National Council, a committee of the four main Cambodian factions which was supposed to "enshrine" the legal sovereignty of Cambodia. This was the first time that a member state allowed the UN to carry out such a comprehensive task.

Thailand and UNTAC

As a neighbour of Cambodia, Thailand had followed events in Cambodia with great interest and concern, particularly since 1976 when the Khmer Rouge took over the government. It wholeheartedly supported the work of UNTAC, politically and materially, through financial contributions to the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia and UNTAC, as well as the dispatching of a Thai engineering battalion of some 700 soldiers to Cambodia to clear mines, repair roads and bridges, and build schools.

In addition to almost a million displaced persons who had returned to Cambodia in earlier periods, Thailand had also cooperated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in repatriating, in 1993, over 360,000 displaced persons from camps in Thailand to Cambodia. This was not only a logistical feat but a humanitarian and political success in that displaced Cambodians were able to go home, to places of their choice, and to participate in the Cambodian general elections. This repatriation, not surprisingly, was judged as one of the major successes of UNTAC.

Because of Thailand's geo-political position, Thai borders also served as staging areas for deployment of UNTAC personnel and national contingents of many countries, and for the transit of a large quantity of UNTAC freight into Cambodia. These Thai contributions to UNTAC's peace-building and development were well known; less well known were Thailand's bilateral assistance to Cambodia and its diplomatic and geo-political roles (including through the Association of South-East Asian Nations), all of which had contributed substantially to the solution of the Cambodian problem.

A Lesson Learned

Many post cold-war crises have both domestic and foreign components. UNTAC's experience confirmed this observation. To solve these crises, one must tackle both components.

The foreign component of a crisis is often easier to solve than the domestic component, once the principal foreign supporters of the local factions have agreed to encourage the settlement of the conflict. In Cambodia's case, it was basically the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, which eventually led to the Paris Settlement Agreements and then to the establishment of UNTAC.

UNTAC's mission, financially the largest UN peace-keeping operation at that time, was to assist in restructuring the social, economic and political pillars of Cambodia. The four factions would then institutionalize their reconciliations within these new structures developed by UNTAC. But national reconciliations only came partially, even up to the present day. UNTAC could not have solved what was basically a deep-rooted historical mistrust amongst the four political factions who refused to cooperate sufficiently with the UN. UNTAC's limited time frame and its inability to fully implement its mandate also did not help.

The lesson learned here is hardly very startling and almost a cliché—you must achieve peace and development yourself, the international community can only provide "seed" money or "seed" assistance. And if it is nurtured with care by all the political factions themselves, this seed can become a tree of peace and development that will grow taller and stronger until it becomes a permanent part of the Cambodian landscape.

The problem faced by Cambodia was typical of a small country trying to adjust to the impact brought about by its powerful foreign friends' change of strategies. Cambodia was more fortunate than some others in that it had the Paris Settlement Agreements and UNTAC to facilitate this adjustment. More importantly, it had neighbours who were also friends and active partners in this adjustment process. ■

Ambassador Asda Jayanama is the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations and President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. This article reflects the personal views of its author.

NETAID Geneva New Jersey London

The Power to End Extreme Poverty is Now Online at www.netaid.org

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and John Chambers, President and CEO of Cisco Systems, Palais des Nations.

Brought to world attention on 9 October by live concerts, TV and radio coverage, the NetAid website launched in September by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Cisco Systems scored over 40 million hits from people in 160 countries during its first short month on the web. The site was created to raise global awareness about and engage a wide range of people and institutions in the fight against extreme poverty. During the initial launch, over 2,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies signed up to be represented on the site.

Sheryl Crow, Giants Stadium

"NetAid already has succeeded as never before in engaging vast numbers of people and connecting them with the world's leading anti-poverty organizations and agencies," said UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown.

His conclusions were confirmed by Mildred Robbins Leet, President of Trickle UP Program, a New York-based organization that helps low-income people start small businesses. "NetAid, she says, "is a powerful new weapon in the fight against global poverty. It will not only raise global awareness about poverty, it will offer people a way to get involved directly and make a difference."

Jamie Drummond, Special Initiatives Executive for Jubilee 2000, an organization leading the battle to eliminate third world debt, concurred. "We live in an historic time that will define our generation," says Drummond. "By promoting the Jubilee 2000 campaign, NetAid is helping make the millennium moment into something meaningful."

Millions of additional hits are expected in the coming months, as the launch phase continues and NetAid television and radio broadcasts of the concerts air around the world. The concerts, which were held at Wembley Stadium, London, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and Giants Stadium, New Jersey, represent the centre-piece of the strategy to popularize the NetAid site (see CHOICES, Vol. 8 No. 2).

Among the world-class artists performing were David Bowie, Sting, Sheryl Crow, Jewel, George Michael, and Bono and Wyclef Jean, who composed "New Day," the NetAid theme song.

Brian Adams, Wembley Stadium

Thus far, the concerts have been broadcast on TV and radio in the United Kingdom and the United States and on radio in another 63 countries. The radio broadcasts will air in 68 more countries and the television show will air in 69 more countries through March 2000, with repeat broadcasts planned in many cases. Concert footage as well as backstage interviews with the artists and the performance of "New Day" are also available for viewing on the site.

"According to Nielsen//NetRatings data, the audience clicking on to www.netaid.org spanned all cultures, classes and age groups. NetAid's pioneering use of the Internet was an effective

Jewel and Bono singing "New Day," the NetAid theme song.

Wyclef Jean, Giants Stadium

tool to reach out to key demographics," says Allen Weiner, vice president of analytical services, NetRatings. In fact, NetAid's 40 million hits made it one of the most successful launches ever of a non-commercial website.

Over the coming months, the NetAid website will be offering more ways to connect people and organizations who wish to engage in a useful exchange of ideas, resources, and success stories regarding the developing world. Interested readers can go to the site to sign up for more information, join the NetAid movement, or offer their ideas on the topics raised or related issues.

A special form is also available on the site for NGOs who would like to sign up to participate in NetAid. Online participants may choose to contribute to NetAid. Monies donated to the project will be managed and distributed by the NetAid Foundation, which will select and fund projects directly related to poverty eradication. For more information visit www.netaid.org.

www.netaid.org

NOTEBOOK

AN ANTHOLOGY: ON CRITICAL ISSUES FACING THE WORLD

It is entirely appropriate that Earth Times Books' first title ***All Of Us*** should be an anthology of articles from the pages of *The Earth Times* newspaper. This compelling volume, subtitled "Births and a better life: Population, development and environment in a globalized world," reminds us of the enormous efforts made by the United Nations and its agencies to deal with vital global issues and of the daunting challenges which lie ahead in the new millennium.

In his introduction, Jack Freeman, one of the editors of ***All Of Us***, tells us that the nearly 100 articles were chosen because they deal with important ongoing global issues such as population, the environment and sustainable human development. They also record an important decade in human history, in which, largely through global conferences sponsored by the United Nations, "the people of the world have begun the task of claiming collective responsibility for the current and future well-being of this planet."

A wide range of information

The articles cover subjects ranging from the environment, gender issues, human rights, and development to health and welfare and international finance. Contributors include President Clinton, Sir Shridath S. Ramphal, Seymour Topping, and numerous development experts and journalists. They cover the work of the United Nations and its agencies, non-governmental organizations and the poor themselves, especially those determined to find their own creative solutions to their problems.

The stories in these pages describe the essence of hope—that no crisis is beyond solving and no pain is beyond easing. In an article first published in 1997, for instance, Ingar Brueggemann, head of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, asserts that family planning has a key role in achieving the right balance between population and resources, and therefore in sustainable development. "But without the provision of adequate women's education and radical improvements in the status of women," she adds, "family planning can not fully succeed."

Brueggemann points out that the *Human Development Report 1997*, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), states that greater gender equality is key to winning the fight against poverty. "Women and children are more likely to suffer poverty than adult males," she points out.

In a 1994 article, Sir Shridath S. Ramphal quotes from a lecture given by Margaret Catley-Carlson, then president of the Population Council. "Every child born in the North consumes, over a lifetime, 20 to 30 times the resources, and accounts for 20 to 30 times the waste—of their counterparts in developing countries."

"So where is the time bomb ticking?" Ramphal questions. "The truth is that there are many explosions in the making. The 95 percent of world population growth that will take place in the South is one—in sheer numbers alone, and with dire implications for the people of the South. But the five percent of world population growth attributable to the North is as large or larger an explosion—not in relation to numbers but to what the numbers imply for the planet." What is needed, he says, is to roll back consumption in the North while reducing population growth in the South.

Among editor Pranay Gupte's contributions to this collection is a memorable 1995 article on South Africa arising from his visit not long after the end of the apartheid era, in the early days of an astonishing political revolution. He describes how South Africans are faring in another "revolution"—against disease, illiteracy, crime, AIDS, economic deprivation and gender inequality. An English-born priest and novelist tells him, "Education is the key here, and there isn't enough of that."

The book offers more than 30 such reports from a wide range of countries. These field reports are especially valuable because they present the voices of grassroots communities and the poor, who talk candidly about how certain programmes have brought about positive change in their lives.

From grassroots projects that have worked to the implementation of commitments made by governments at world conferences, ***All Of Us*** combines the best field reports with the opinions and views of people who have helped to make a difference. ■

By Nosh Nalavala, the editor of UNDP NEWS *and* Traveler's India.

Edited by Jack Freeman and Pranay Gupte
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MATTERS OF FACT

Information is drawn from various editions of the *Human Development Report*, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. The report is published in English by Oxford University Press, and in nine other language editions by a variety of publishers.

Conflicts. Past battles were fought between standing armies, but wars today affect **civilians** most, since they are civil wars, **guerrilla** actions and ethnic disputes over territory or government. › Civilian fatalities have climbed from 5% of war-related deaths at the turn of the century to 90% in the wars of the 1990s. Over the past decade **armed conflict** has killed 2 million children, disabled 4 to 5 million, left 12 million homeless and more than 1 million **orphaned** or separated from their parents. › Every month, more than 2,000 people are killed or maimed by **mine explosions**. Although around 100,000 mines were removed in 1994, 2 million more were planted. It is estimated that nearly 100 million people are caught in a cycle of civil strife and hunger. About 50 million people have been forced to flee their homes. In 1995, there were 46 million **displaced** people. Of the total, 40 million were in developing countries and 6 million in industrial or **transition countries**. › Sudan has 4 million internally displaced people and 730,000 refugees from other countries. › The number of **refugees** alone has increased dramatically—from 2.5 million in 1960 to 16 million in 1995. Many conflicts go on **for years.** › By 1998 armed conflicts had been running for 20 years in Afghanistan, 10 in Somalia, 14 in Sri Lanka and 15 in Sudan.